

Mr. Sumner and the Legislature.  
To the Editor of the Journal 50

The letter of Wendell Phillips, Esq., in Tuesday's Advertiser, is creditable to his friendship for Mr. Sumner; and to that portion of it which defends our honored Senator against an impeachment of his motives in calling for an erasure of all ~~victorious~~ inscriptions on the battle-flags of the republic, <sup>relating to the rebellion</sup> and which pays a glowing tribute to his eminent public services, I give my hearty approval. But when he says, unqualifiedly, "Mr. Sumner's record is made up, and far beyond any man's reach," he claims what cannot be granted, and what Mr. Phillips himself has more than once contested. He admits that no man, however eminent, is above censure, but says "there are public servants whom a State should be slow to judge." But as Mr. Sumner's course, for more than a score of years, has only in a single instance been impugned by







the General Court; any judgment more slow than this must amount to absolute conformity and approval. This forbearance is the more note-worthy if, as Mr. Phillips asserts, Mr. Sumner "has often in past years, in the Senate, proposed a measure upon which, had a vote been taken in Massachusetts at once, the majority would have been against him." He says he can count up a dozen such instances, but I am unable to recall any; and, at best, it is only an unsupported assertion to make a point. Certainly, if any Senator has ever had the support of the State that sent him to Congress, and has confidently relied upon that support, it has been Mr. Sumner, whether through evil or through good report, so far as the nation at large was concerned. Even when he made his extraordinary onslaught upon General Grant, impeaching the latter of the gravest crimes and misdemeanors, he fully expected to carry Massachusetts ~~with him~~ (over)



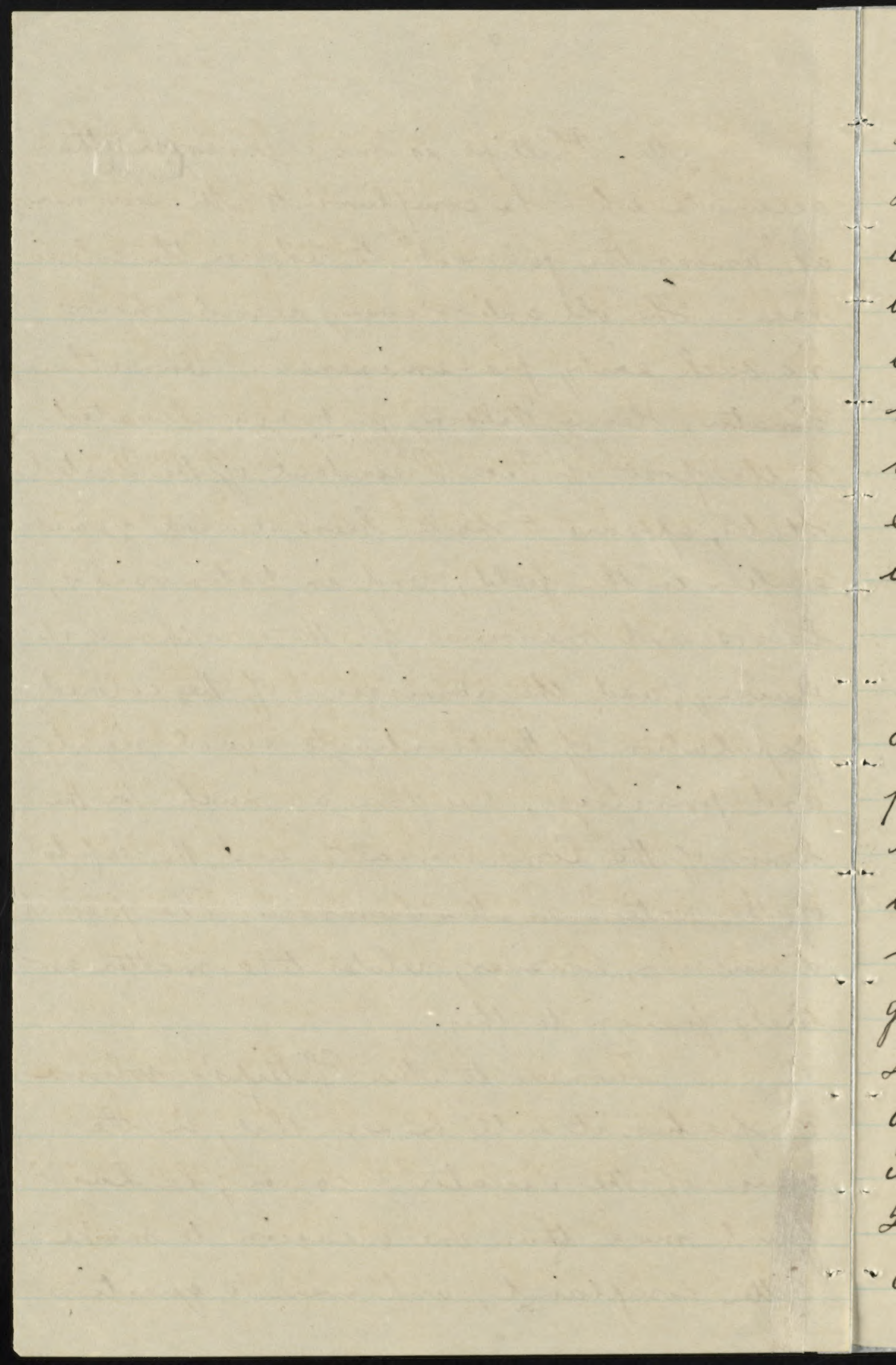
with him. "We sent him to Washington," says Mr. Phillips, "to utter the State's voice," and, with a few exceptions, he has faithfully done so.



Mr. Phillips is more generous than accurate when he compliments Mr. Sumner as "among the foremost" to redeem the colored race. The old anti-slavery record shows no such early pre-eminence. Our other Senator, Henry Wilson, just now elevated to the post of Vice President of the United States, appears to have been several years earlier in the field; and in testimonies, labors and measures for the overthrow of slavery, and the admission of the colored population of the country to equal rights and privileges, has done as much "for the honor of the Commonwealth and the safety of the nation" as Mr. Sumner. The present discussion, however, relates to a matter entirely foreign to this.

Turning to Mr. Phillips's volume of speeches, it will be seen that, in the course of the Senator's career, he has found more than one occasion to make bitter complaint, and even to question





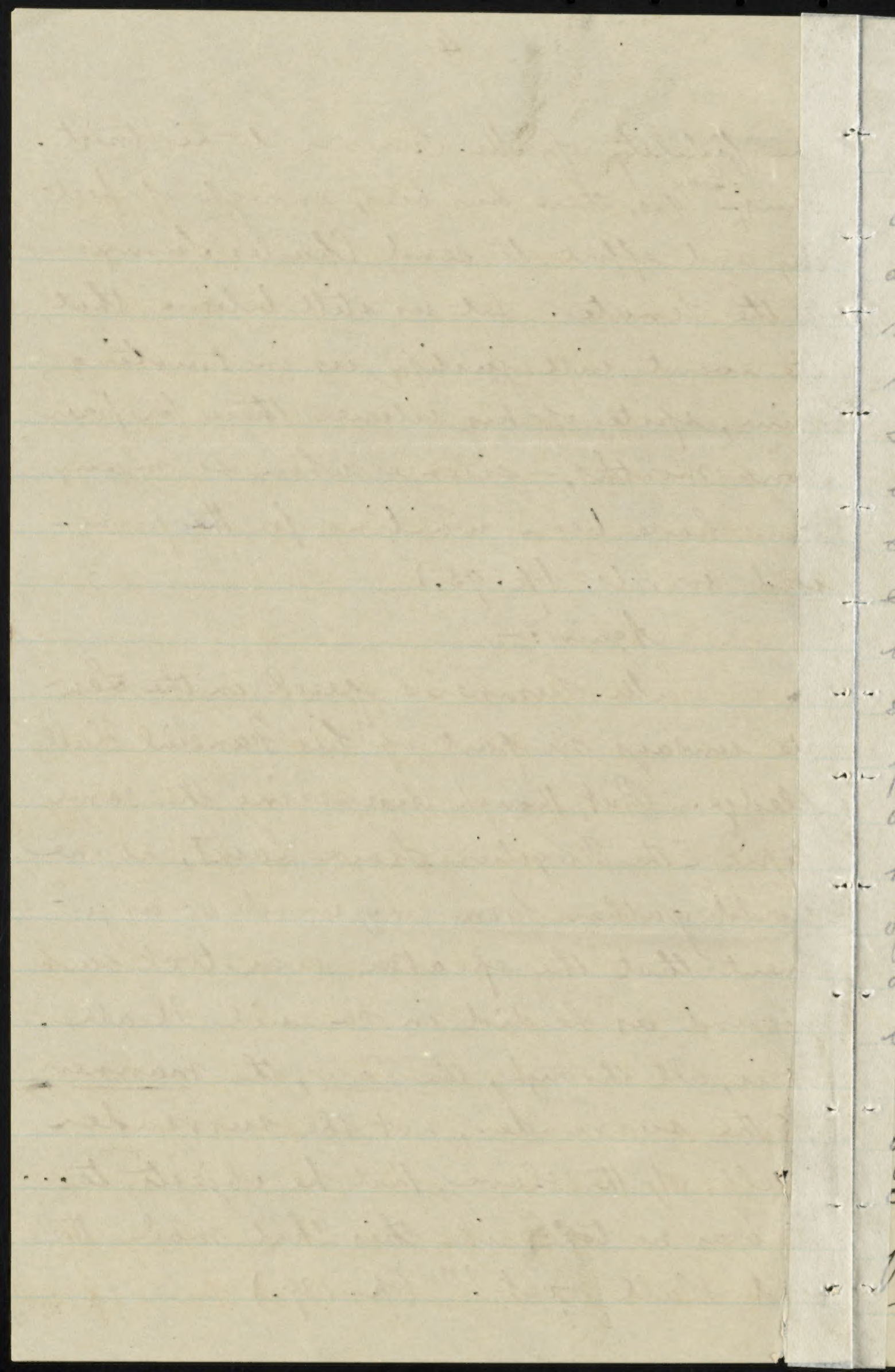


the fidelity of Mr. Sumner to his trust. Thus:—"Yes, there has been enough of feeling and effort to send Charles Sumner to the Senate. Let us still believe that the event will justify us in trusting him, spite of his silence there for four long months,—silence when so many ears have been waiting for the promised words." (p. 95.)

Again:—

"Mr. Sumner's speech in the Senate unsays no part of his Faneuil Hall pledge. But, though discussing the same topic [the Fugitive Slave Law], no one would gather from any word or argument that the speaker ever took such ground as he did in Faneuil Hall. It is, all through, the law, the manner of the surrender, not the surrender itself, of the slave, that he objects to;... It was no tone like this that made the old Hall rock!" (p. 139.)







Again:—

"Mr. Sumner 'knows no better aim, under the Constitution, than to bring back the government' to where it was in 1789! Has the voyage been so very honest and prosperous a one, in his opinion, that his only wish is to start again with the same ship, the same crew, and the same sailing-orders? What new guaranties does he propose to prevent the voyage from being again turned into a piratical slave-trading cruise? None! Have <sup>(p. 145.)</sup> sixty years taught us nothing?" ^

Again:—

"I hope I am just to Mr. Sumner; I have known him long, and honor him: I know his genius, I honor his virtues; yet if, from his high place, he sends out counsels which I think dangerous to the cause, I am bound to raise my voice against them." (p. 148.)



[illegible]



Again:—

"Judging by the past, whose will and wit can we trust? None of them,—I am utterly impartial,—neither President nor Cabinet nor Senator. Peel off Seward, peel off Halleck, peel off Blair, peel off Sumner,—yes, Massachusetts Senators as well as others. No, I will not say peel off our Massachusetts Senators; but I will say their recent action has very materially lessened my confidence in their intelligence and fidelity. I will tell you why. . . . A Massachusetts Colonel mutinied in the face of the enemy, and a Massachusetts Senator [Sumner] made him a Brigadier-General. Such Republicanism will never put down the rebellion. . . . What rule for its conduct could the army take from such an example? Spit on the government, and expect promotion,—trample on







the negro, and be sure of employ-  
ment! When Mr. Sumner ~~let~~<sup>let</sup> personal  
feelings lead him to such a step, he  
betrayed the negro. . . Massachusetts  
Senators must reform on these points  
altogether, if they expect trust in future.  
Let them see to it, lest, while they think  
they are using others for good ends,  
they may themselves be made tools for  
base ones." (pp. 559, 561.)

It will be seen by these extracts  
that Mr. Phillips has found frequent oc-  
asion for sharp criticism of Mr. Sumner,  
and that there is a wide discrepancy be-  
tween this estimate of <sup>the Senator's</sup> ~~his~~ anti-slavery  
vigilance and fidelity, and that now  
so eulogistically pronounced by the former.  
It is a sufficient answer to the claim  
that "Mr. Sumner's record is made up,  
and is far beyond any man's reach."  
<sup>at so: he has greatly erred in the past, and</sup>  
is still liable to err, even if he has  
not done so in the present instance.







Referring to the inscription of victories on our national battle-flags, Mr. Phillips says: —

"Show me the community, or the nation, that has ever inflicted such an insult (?) on any of its people. Greece repudiates it; France and Germany scorn it. England allows no name on any of her flags which can pain a Cavalier, or a Roundhead, a Scotsman or an Irishman."

But are these analogous cases?

Were not the battles fought simply to pull down one dynasty, and to uphold another? Ours was a struggle of the people for the preservation of their free institutions, and <sup>the</sup> rebellion was in the interest of a bloody and merciless slaveholding despotism, in utter denial and subversion of all the principles laid down in the Declaration of Independence. It was the American flag,







without any other inscription upon it than the stars and stripes, that the Southern rebels sought to humble and forever repudiate; and it is the same flag they now hate and despise, and see in it their inglorious defeat. In no way have they evinced any interest in ~~this~~ <sup>the present</sup> controversy as to what shall be inscribed upon that victorious ensign; a controversy which to them, doubtless, appears very much like straining at gnats, and swallowing a camel. "I should despise a Southerner," says Mr. Phillips, "who would march under such a flag"! What! if he were thoroughly loyal, and convinced that the rebellion was all wrong! Surely, if still disloyal in heart and purpose, it would be folly to try to "conciliate" him by any such devices. A loyal South will sanction all that loyalty has achieved;







just as the English people now see  
no cause for shame or humiliation  
in the monument on Bunker Hill,  
or the <sup>jubilant</sup> observance of the Fourth of  
July by the American people.

Massachusetts.

Boston, March 12, 1873.



Wm. M. M. M.

Wm.